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LAOS: The abortive coup launched yesterday by exiled former air force commander General Ma, failed to attract support from right-wing elements in Laos.

General Ma has resided in Bangkok since October 1966 when he led a similarly unsuccessful coup attempt against the Souvanna government. Although the precise origins of his ill-conceived action are not clear, its obvious purpose was to sabotage the political accord being worked out between the government and the Communists. Ma probably hoped that right-wing dissatisfaction with the terms negotiated by Souvanna would cause military and political rightists to rally to his side. Leading rightist cabinet minister Sisouk, however, quickly expressed his support for the Prime Minister as did Lao Army commander General Bounpone and deputy commander General Kouprasith.

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Government forces regained control of Vientiane's radio station and airfield several hours after they had been seized by dissidents. According to fragmentary information, Ma's company-sized force crossed into Laos from Thailand and commandeered several T-28 aircraft which were used to strafe and bomb a Lao Army camp on the outskirts of the capital. The coup force has been either killed, captured, or scattered and General Ma reportedly has been executed by a Lao Army officer.

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EUROPE: The West Germans circulated a wide-ranging draft declaration on trans-Atlantic relations at a meeting on 16 August of the senior political advisers of NATO.

The declaration generally reflects standard German positions on military and political issues. The draft calls for the Allies to adhere to the NATO strategy of flexible response and forward defense, and states that the presence of US forces in Europe is "indispensable" for maintaining a balance of power. It calls on the United States to reaffirm its commitment to maintain and improve its forces in Europe and to make reductions only within the framework of mutual reductions with the Warsaw Pact. The declaration also calls on the NATO allies to give priority to the issue of equitable burden-sharing, particularly with regard to the US forces in Europe. Although the Germans had earlier expressed reservation about the US-Soviet agreement of 22 June on the prevention of nuclear wars, their draft declaration approves the agreement.

The Italian representative commented that Rome also is developing its ideas for early submission. The Canadian representative urged that work on a declaration start soon.

The French representative, clearly surprised by the timing of the German initiative, noted that movement toward drafting had gone further than Paris had anticipated. He expressed doubt that the North Atlantic Council had the necessary authority to draft a document on Atlantic relations.

The British, who earlier had submitted a draft more limited in scope than the German draft, commented that they are not committed to a declaration but that, if one is desired, it will take time to prepare; the Allies should begin "mind-clearing" now.

Further NATO consideration of a draft is scheduled for 27 August. [redacted]

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Prague has raised the tenor of its anti-Chinese campaign by charging in the party daily on 16 August that Maoism has degenerated into an "anti-Communist monster." The Husak regime thus moves to the fore in the current Soviet-inspired, anti-Chinese vituperations emanating from much of East Europe.

With the fifth anniversary of the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia coming on 20-21 August, Prague apparently has chosen the China issue as one of the ways to demonstrate to Moscow that the Husak government is pursuing correct policies. Prague's harsh criticism meshes with several themes in recent Soviet propaganda, including the contention that China, not satisfied with splitting the socialist world, is determined to drive a wedge between Moscow and the nonaligned world as well. The accusation that Maoism has departed from the socialist norm by stressing the division of the world into rich and poor countries rather than the class struggle and the allegation that Peking aspires to become "a kind of world center" echo similar Soviet charges.

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Greece: George Papadopoulos was sworn in yesterday as the first President of the new Greek Republic. Shortly after the swearing-in ceremony, Papadopoulos announced that martial law, in effect since April 1967, was lifted and that all political prisoners were amnestied. The President said that a new government would be formed in early October "with political personalities," in preparation for general parliamentary elections next year.

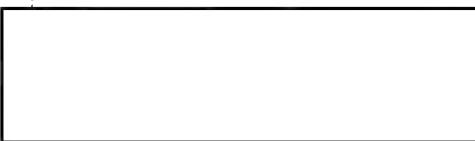
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